

PRODUCE SAFETY

PURPOSE: This operational guide is provided to assist all Air Force club personnel in the prevention of microbial contamination.

SCOPE: This guide applies to all club personnel.

GENERAL: It is important to assure customers that the produces sold are a low source of risk for food-borne disease. Processes in use at all levels of the food chain must be scientifically based and economically feasible so they result in significant risk reduction for food borne illnesses.

GUIDANCE:

1. The development of a foodservice hazardous critical contact point system for produce is more difficult than other recipe procedures because there is often no real “kill step” to assure destruction of microbes at any point in the farm to table chain. Efforts should be focused on risk reduction and the prevention of cross-contamination in operations to gain the greatest benefit. Operations must be as concerned about the safety and quality of the product provided by their suppliers as they are about their own safety control strategies.
2. The National Restaurant Association recommends that you keep these four steps in mind once produce is in your club to assure it doesn’t get contaminated.
 - a. Order fresh produce frequently and set up receiving guidelines. Only except a product that is in good condition and properly refrigerated. Look for signs of spoilage such as unusual orders and colors, excessive liquid in the delivery bags, shriveled, moldy, or bruised items. Check the condition of the truck and containers for damage and unsanitary dirt and debris.
 - b. Before service, thoroughly wash fruits and vegetables with potable running water. Do not use standing water. Detergent or soap is not acceptable for cleaning produce. Rinse again just before prepping to avoid cross-contamination bacteria from another food or source contaminating a clean food. Hearty produce such as carrots, potatoes, or radishes can be brushed with a clean vegetable brush, and some experts recommend a double rinsing to remove 99% of contaminants.
 - c. Avoid cross-contamination in storage. Be sure that produce is not stored below raw meats or fish, where dripping juices can cause contamination. When handling produce, make sure hands, gloves, countertops, and utensils are clean and sanitary. Produce should never come in contact with raw meat or raw meat juices. Always prep produce with a clean and sanitized knife and cutting board. Always wash hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds before handling produce. Employees must always wash their hands after using the restroom or handling raw meat products to avoid transferring bacteria to produce.
 - d. Do not prep produce until it is to be used. Don’t leave cut produce at room temperature for an extended period of time. Precut items not served immediately should be stored in a cooler

at 41 degrees F or lower. Discard salad bar items after 4 hours, unless they have been maintained at 41 degrees F. Don't let produce, such as berries, mushrooms, and cauliflower sit in water as they will quickly deteriorate.

SUMMARY: The foodservice industry continues to look for new tools to help provide a safer product. Until we have them, we will have to rely on improved produce-supplier relationships and common sense procedures.